

# United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

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Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2015-0028

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August 21, 2015

## Sand Island Group Campsite

| **Location:** T.40 S., R.21 E., Section 33; within the Sand Island Campground

**Applicant/Address** Monticello Field Office, 365 N. Main St., Monticello, Utah

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Department of Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Monticello Field Office  
365 N. Main St.  
Monticello, Utah 84534  
Phone: 435-587-1500  
Fax: 435-587-1518



**SAND ISLAND GROUP CAMPSITE  
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# **SAND ISLAND GROUP CAMPSITE**

## **DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2015-0028**

### **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

In Sand Island Campground there are currently 24 sites that are available to campers on a first come, first serve basis. For many years due to the lack of a designated group site, larger groups have been able to reserve sites 1-5 to use as a group site. These sites are located on the eastern-most end of the campground and are small. When these sites are full with a group, it limits the access to a trail that exits this end of the campground. These sites are generally reserved by groups as they stage for their permitted trip to run the San Juan River. Several years ago site 24 was improved by adding a shade structure and additional tables with the idea that this would be the new group site to eliminate group use in sites 1-5. However this site has a 20 person group limit while river-permits have a 33 person group limit. This combined with the increased popularity and additional other uses in the area have caused the need for a second large group site. Sites 1-5 are still needed for larger groups and the original intent of improving site 24 was so to eliminate group use in sites 1-5. With the addition of a new dedicated group site with a 40 person limit, the hope is to eliminate group use in sites 1-5.

#### **1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The BLM's purpose in proposing the group site is to improve the user experience.

The BLM has a need to provide a group camp site in the Sand Island Campground and proposes to develop and designate a new group camp site to accommodate large groups that camp in the campground. The new group camp site would be within the existing administrative boundary and established approximately mid-way between site 9 and site 24 in Sand Island Campground. Development of the group site is expected to begin in September, 2015.

#### **1.3 CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)**

The proposed action has been determined to be in conformance with the terms and conditions of the Monticello Resource Management Plan (October, 2008) as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Monticello's RMP states the following:

##### **REC-5 (pg.89)**

Existing developed recreation sites will be maintained. New sites/facilities/trails will be developed in response to user demand, amenity value, and critical resource protection needs.

##### **REC-15 (pg.90)**

Develop or improve development of recreation sites as prioritized below:

- Kane Gulch Ranger Station (40 acres)
- Sand Island Campground (21 acres)

- Mexican Hat Launch site (20 acres)
- Hamburger Rock Campground (20 acres)
- Comb Wash Campground (10 acres)
- Butler Wash Ruin (60 acres)
- Mule Canyon Ruin (10 acres)
- Three Kiva Pueblo (10 acres)
- Shay Mountain Vista Campground (20 acres)
- Indian Creek Recreational and Camping Facilities as outlined in the Indian Creek Recreation Corridor Plan (BLM 2005).

#### **1.4 RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS:**

The action is consistent with the Master Plan for San Juan County of July 8, 1996. The Master Plan identifies recreation and tourism as an economic opportunity and calls for working to promote recreation and tourism within the county while maintaining a rural lifestyle.

The County Master Plan states:

“The County views recreation and tourism as an additional economic opportunity...this opportunity may only be in its infant stage. The County will continue...promoting the county’s tourist industry”

## **CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives. No other alternatives were considered since there were no additional issues or mitigation actions that needed to be addressed through the analysis of additional alternatives. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

### **2.2 PROPOSED ACTION**

The BLM Monticello Field Office proposes adding a group campsite in the Sand Island Campground. The group site would be designed to have a maximum limit of 40 people and would be established approximately mid-way between site 9 and site 24. The project would consist of sage brush removal, a gravel entry way and gravel parking area designed to hold 8-10 regular vehicles and 3-5 oversized vehicles. One single vault toilet and a shade shelter with picnic tables and a fire ring would be installed. There is already an existing water hydrant and valve in this location. The site plus the entry will cover approximately 0.5 acres.

## **2.3 NO ACTION**

This alternative would deny the project as proposed. The designation of a group site would not be approved. If denied, the current group camping would be maintained.

# **CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the potentially affected environment of the project area as identified in the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis (IDT) checklist as documented in Appendix A. The checklist indicates which resources of concern are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis. No resources were identified as being potentially impacted by the proposed project. This chapter provides a baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

## **3.2 GENERAL SETTING**

The proposed project is located within the existing administrative boundary of Sand Island Campground, the main river launch for the San Juan River. The campground is currently managed as Visual Resource Management Area III (VRM III). The vegetation in the area consists of sagebrush, cottonwood trees and willows. The elevation at the campsite is approximately 4,300 feet and it is outside of the 100-year floodplain.

### **3.2.1 RECREATION**

Current recreational use in this area has been increasing over the years and Sand Island is appearing in more and more publications which promote both its fantastic birding opportunities as well as the abundant rock art. Furthermore, it is the main launching point for San Juan River trips and many river parties camp here the night before and/or after their river voyage. Sand Island Campground currently serves nearly 13,000 annual river runners through the BLM San Juan River program as well as many other campers, hikers, and other visitors. Table 3.1 shows the group site reservations for the years 2012 through 2014 and Table 3.2 shows the Sand Island Campground use for the years 2005 through 2014. Both tables show the high level of use for the Sand Island Campground.

**Table 3.1 Group Site Reservations**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Groups</b>	<b>Number of People</b>	<b>Average per Group</b>
2012	38	845	22
2013	45	801	18
2014	46	861	19

**Table 3.2 Sand Island Campground use for past ten years**

Year	Permits	People	Dollars
2005	1646	5802	\$15,253.76
2006	1569	5326	\$14,599.09
2007	1702	5788	\$15,568.30
2008	1543	5697	\$14,237.84
2009	1547	6020	\$15,204.37
2010	1605	5339	\$16,179.08
2011	2478	8392	\$22,436.36
2012	2191	7124	\$20,133.16
2013	2205	6779	\$19,738.78
2014	2481	7700	\$21,914.95

## **CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **4.1 PROPOSED ACTION DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS**

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action on recreation uses.

#### ***4.1.1 RECREATION***

The Monticello Field Office of the BLM proposes designating a group campsite in the Sand Island Campground. Currently there is only one designated group site in the campground with a limit of 15 to 20 people. Designating a group site would provide large groups of visitors the opportunity to camp in one large area with picnic tables, a metal fire grate and adequate space to park several vehicles. Recreational opportunities would improve with the designation of a group site by freeing up other individual sites for other campers.

### **4.2 NO ACTION**

This alternative would deny the project as proposed and no group site would be designated and built.

#### ***4.2.1 RECREATION***

If the No action alternative is selected, large groups may continue to displace other users that may impact other resources through increased dispersed camping outside of the campground.

### **4.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

In addition to boating use there has been an increase in sightseeing, bicycling and camping. It is anticipated that this demand will, if anything, increase. This designated group campsite would

have a positive effect and would contribute to the protection of the areas cultural and natural resources. When group sites have been designated, experience has shown that visitors most often stay in the designated sites. The proposed action is a continuation of the management goal in this area to improve camping opportunities while protecting cultural and natural resources. This action should have no impact on the reasonable foreseeable development of the area.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED**

**Table 5.1. List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Purpose &amp; Authorities for Consultation or Coordination</b>	<b>Findings &amp; Conclusions</b>
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Section 7 Consultation	On July 10, 2015 the Monticello Field Office sent an informal consultation letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service that described the project and explained the BLM's determination that the project would have no adverse effect on the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher razorback sucker, Colorado pike minnow, and the Yellow-billed cuckoo. In a response received from the US Fish and Wildlife Service on August 10, 2015, they concurred with BLM's determination.
State Historic Preservation Office	Section 106 Consultation	On August 19, 2015, a Class III Cultural Resource Survey was completed for the proposed campsite area. No cultural resources were identified during the survey. The cultural report for the survey will be included in Monticello's quarterly report per its programmatic agreement with SHPO.

### **List of Preparers**

**Table 5.2. List of Preparers**

#### **BLM Preparers**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document</b>
Casey Worth	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Drafting the EA
Rebecca Doolittle	Planner and Environmental Coordinator	EA Review

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

**DETERMINATION OF STAFF:** *(Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)*

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA  
Section D of the DNA form. The Rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

Determi- nation	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
<b>RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)</b>				
NI	Air Quality	<p>During construction operations the proposed action will result in emissions from the operation of internal combustion engines, and fugitive dust from the operations of vehicles on unpaved surfaces. These emissions will be minor, temporary, and will rapidly disperse.</p> <p>San Juan County is currently considered to be in compliance with the NAAQS criteria pollutants (Utah Division of Air Quality 2012 Annual Report). The proposed action is not likely to cause or contribute to a violation of the NAAQS</p> <p>Air quality will not be affected to the degree that would require detailed analysis in the EA.</p>	Cliff Giffen	8/17/15
NI	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The project occurs within the San Juan River ACEC in a developed recreation site. The project will not appreciably change the resources for which the ACEC is designated.	Casey Worth	6/19/15
NP	Cultural Resources	There are no cultural resources within the proposed group site; those nearby are resilient to impact. A Class III inventory was done for the entire proposed project area.	Don Simonis	8/21/15
NI	Environmental Justice	There will be no impact on Environmental Justice.	Casey Worth	6/19/15
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	The Monticello Field Office does not include any designated prime and unique farmlands administered by the BLM (MFO FRMP/FEIS, pg 4-7).	Jed Carling	6/22/15
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species	The proposed site is within the established Sand Island Campground; increasing the number of visitors with Sand Island may temporarily displace wildlife during periods of high use.	M. Scott	6/23/15
NI	Floodplains	<p>The proposed group site is within the existing Sand Island Campground, which is outside the immediate active floodplains. This proposed site is further from the river's edge than the majority of the developed camp sites. The proposed action does not result in any permanent fills or diversions, or placement of permanent facilities in floodplains or special flood hazard areas.</p> <p>The proposed limited scope of disturbance (0.5 acres) would not negatively influence the site's ability to provide for the physical aspects of a functional floodplain system. Active floodplains would continue to provide the ability to dissipate energies during high flow events.</p>	Jed Carling	07/01/15



Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		Thereby, for reasons listed above, floodplains are not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required.		
NP	Fuels/Fire Management	Due to the current fuel type, there are no planned fuels projects in the proposed group site area. Fire management response will not be affected by these actions.	Casey Worth	8/19/15
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production	The designated group campsite would occur within the existing administrative boundary of the Sand Island developed recreation site. In accordance with the Monticello Field Office RMP, mineral development that may result in surface disturbing activities are not allowed within developed recreation sites. Therefore, there would be no conflict between the proposed action and future mineral resource development.	T. McDougall	8/14/2015
NI	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	<p>Russian knapweed, an invasive, noxious, and non-native weed, occurs in the vicinity of the proposed group camp site. Russian knapweed is listed as a Class B noxious weed in Utah, which requires action to control their populations. The BLM, through partnership with San Juan County Weed Department, actively implements integrated weed control measures in the area</p> <p>Cheatgrass is not on the Utah Noxious Weed List, yet is an invasive, non-native grass species, and is found in the area intermixed within portions of various native plant communities. The frequency of cheatgrass has fluctuated in response to precipitation patterns and disturbance regimes</p> <p>Tamarisks and Russian olives (invasive, non-native) are aggressive shrubs or trees established in the area, yet not at the immediate proposed group site. The MFO's fuel program has implemented treatments in the area to reduce the occurrence of these plants.</p> <p>The proposed development of a camp site in an existing campground does not pose an appreciable threat to the further establishment and spread of invasive species / noxious weed species. In addition, integrated pest management practices are being applied annually on known listed weed infestations in the immediate area. The Monticello Field Office (MFO) does not anticipate any changes in the proportion of controllable spreading agents to contribute in the establishment and spread of invasive plants.</p> <p>Thereby, for reasons listed above, invasive species and noxious weeds are not impacted to a degree that detailed analysis is required.</p>	Jed Carling	07/01/15
NI	Lands/Access	BLM holds a right-of-way, UTU-71759, for the Sand Island Recreation site. There are no other land use authorizations within the BLM right-of-way that will be affected by this proposed action.	Chris Ransel	8/17/15
NI	Livestock Grazing	The Sand Island Campground is located in the Perkins North Allotment. The campground, including the group site, is unavailable to grazing, as outlined in the RMP GRA-17 (pg. 77). The campground is currently fenced to exclude livestock. Thereby, development of a group site in an existing campground that is closed to grazing will have no impacts to livestock grazing to a degree that detailed analysis is required.	Jed Carling	6/22/15

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Migratory Birds	Construction for the proposed project would not occur during critical breeding and nesting times for migratory birds (May 1-August 31). Increasing the number of visitors with Sand Island may temporarily displace birds during periods of high use.	M.Scott	6/23/15
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	A Class III inventory identified no cultural resources in the proposed project area. No religious concerns have been identified for the project area.	Don Simonis	8/21/15
NP	Paleontology	The proposed campsite and road closure points are on recent alluvial deposits with no significant potential for paleontological resources. If fossils are discovered during construction, work must stop and the district paleontologist must be contacted before work may resume.	R. Hunt-Foster	8/17/15
NI	Rangeland Health Standards	Utah Standards for Rangeland Health are individually addressed as separate resources for determination of impacts in this checklist (Standard #1-Soils, #2-Riparian, #3-Biotic (vegetation/wildlife), and #4-Water Quality). Thereby, there are no impacts that require detailed analysis to Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines that are not already being considered by the individual resource.	Jed Carling	07/01/15
PI	Recreation	There will be no negative impacts to recreational use. Establishing a group site would enhance recreational opportunities for large groups while protecting resources by confining group camping to established, designated sites.	Casey Worth	6/19/15
NI	Socio-Economics	There will be no impact on Socio-Economics with the establishment of the group site.	Casey Worth	6/19/15
NI	Soils	The proposed action occurs entirely within the 15—Green River-Bankard families-Riverwash association, 0 to 4 percent slopes as defined in the Soil Survey of San Juan county, Utah, Central Part. The soils are up to 60 inches deep.  The proposed action will affect less than 1 acre. This area is nominal compared to the total extent of the soil type. The soil resource will not be impacted to the degree that would require detailed analysis in the EA.	CGiffen	8/17/15
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	There are no known T&E or candidate plant species in the area of the proposed action.	M. Scott	6/23/15
NI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	The Proposed project area is within Critical habitat for Southwestern willow flycatcher, razorback sucker and Colorado pike minnow, and potential habitat for Yellow-billed cuckoo. Surveys for these species have been done and are known to occur within the area. Construction of the campsite would not occur during breeding or nesting season. The small area of disturbance would not impact critical habitat directly and no tree species will be removed.	M.Scott	6/23/15
NI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	No hazardous wastes are expected to be generated as a result of the proposed group site. Petroleum products would be used for equipment needed for construction. Spills or releases are not likely but would be properly clean up and disposed of if an incident did occur. Solid wastes generated, trash and human waste are removed and properly disposed of by contractors. Wastes hazardous or solid would not be generated to a degree that requires detailed analysis.	J. Brown	8/17/15
NI	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)	The proposed group site is within the existing Sand Island Campground, located in the uplands above the Sand Juan River. The campground has an existing water system. The	M. Scott	6/23/15

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		proposed site would not have impacts to water resources or quality.		
NI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	<p>The proposed group site is within the existing Sand Island Campground, which is located in the uplands on the fringe of any defined wetlands and/or riparian areas along the San Juan River. This proposed site is further from the river's edge than the majority of the developed camp sites.</p> <p>Further development of the campground will have no appreciable impacts on riparian zones. Existing cottonwood trees and privets in the area will not be disturbed. The ability of the nearby riparian areas to retain properly functioning condition attributes that are capable to withstand high stream flow event would not be negatively influenced by the action. Stream channel morphology and functions are appropriate to the soil type, climate, and landform along the river and will continue under the proposal. Thereby, there are no affects to a degree that detailed analysis is required.</p>	Jed Carling	07/01/15
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no Wild and Scenic River sections in the project area.	Casey Worth	6/23/15
NP	Wilderness/WSA	There are no Wilderness or WSA's in the project area.	Casey Worth	6/23/15
NI	Woodland / Forestry	The proposed action would not remove any woodland or forestry products. The Sand Island Campground area is limited to on-site collection of dead wood for campfires only.	M. Scott	7/6/15
NI	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species	<p>The proposed camp site is located in a Semiwet Saline Streambank (Fremont Cottonwood) ecological site. Vegetation of this site has an overstory primarily of cottonwoods, privet, four-wing saltbush, rabbitbrush, and greasewood with an understory Indian ricegrass, sand dropseed, and galleta grass.</p> <p>The proposal will disturb approximately 0.5 acres within the existing and developed Sand Island Campground. Existing cottonwood trees and privets will not be disturbed. This action would not impact vegetation to a degree that detailed analysis is required, because the scale of disturbance is nominal in relation to available vegetation in the immediate area, biotic integrity would continue and be maintained at a level appropriate for the site and species involved, it would have no negative influence on the landscape's ability to achieve the Standards for Rangeland Health, and it occurs within an existing developed campground with similar impacts.</p>	Jed Carling	07/01/15
NI	Visual Resources	Visual resources would not be affected as the area is already impacted. The project would be compliant with VRM Class III management objectives.	Casey Worth	6/23/15
NP	Areas with Wilderness Characteristics	There are no Areas with Wilderness Characteristics in the project area.	Casey Worth	6/23/15

**FINAL REVIEW:**

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	/s/ Brian Quigley	08/21/2015	
Authorized Officer	/s/ Brian Quigley	08/21/2015	

## APPENDIX B

### Proposed Group Site Location and Design







